



City of Seattle

Mayor Jenny A. Durkan

April 19, 2019

Secretary Sinclair:

As you are aware, the City of Seattle continues to strengthen our support for individuals who are living with criminal history and/or have been incarcerated. This work is fundamental to advancing our race and social justice values as a City. In 2018, the Department of Corrections (DOC) released about 1,500 individuals convicted of felonies from prison in King County. In addition, there are approximately 100 individuals released from jail in King County every day. Returning to the community from jail or prison is a complex transition for both individuals, families, and communities. Many of these individuals are still serving sentences that require monitoring under community supervision in order to ensure public safety.

I appreciate your prompt attention to look into a matter regarding a video that we received from a constituent. It shows a Yakima County Department of Corrections transport to Seattle where individuals were released in a parking lot under I-5 without any apparent support services. Best practices around reentry require an individualized transition plan that prescribes a warm handoff from the institution to the individual's family and community and appropriate services. Individuals should not simply be dropped on a street in Seattle, whether by the courthouse or under the freeway. As relayed below, we would like to continue efforts to ensure individuals are connected with their families or communities upon release, and/or seamlessly connected with appropriate shelter and housing services.

Following our discussions, we appreciate that the DOC has immediately changed its policy to no longer drop individuals near the King County jail. Instead, requiring transports to connect individuals directly with the DOC Community Justice Centers (CJCs) for the purpose of providing comprehensive services and monitoring those who are reentering the community. Individuals transported to Seattle will now return to the Seattle Community Justice Center, a DOC facility, which will allow them to be first connected to services and more quickly able to return to the jurisdiction listed as their home.

Upon reentering society, many individuals are likely to struggle with substance use, lack of adequate education and job skills, limited housing options, and mental and behavioral health issues. While the City has limited resources for reentry, we believe strongly in ensuring all individuals have access to services and opportunity upon release. This is particularly important because, as reported by Seattle Reentry Workgroup Final Report, approximately half of all individuals incarcerated in King County Jail are believed to be experiencing homelessness, and people of color are disproportionately impacted. The City of Seattle wants to ensure public safety and ensure that any individuals returning to our region have access to services and supports.

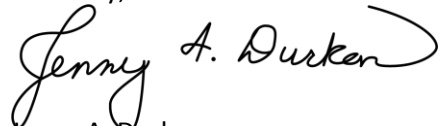
We are hopeful that you can continue to provide us with any additional information that you may receive relating to the history, scope, and impacts of these practices by contractors like the Yakima

County Department of Corrections that could help identify any other gaps in the system. We request this be subject to a thorough review. This review would include a timeline and numbers of formerly incarcerated individuals involved in these types of jail releases over the last two years, the process by which each individual has been/will be assessed for discharge, the discharge and transport protocols, any release planning provided to these individuals, notifications and liaison practices with appropriate law enforcement and social services personnel, and whether and to what extent adequate support has been provided to released individuals, and whether individuals are returned to their own communities.

Using this additional information, it is our understanding that the Statewide Reentry Council would be interested in adding into their work plan an assessment on policies, procedures or resources that may be needed not just in Seattle but statewide for individuals being released from jail. Specifically, this could include transportation practices and recommendations to create better access to services upon release. We are hopeful that the Statewide Reentry Council, working with the Washington State Sentencing Guidelines Commission, could use Seattle as a model for protocols and practices to provide meaningful resources and seamless connection to job training, behavioral health services, and emergency services like case management, diversion, shelter, and housing.

We look forward to working with you and receiving the results from the review. Please let me know how the City of Seattle can further join in these continuing conversations on reentry. We know that the failure of the system to provide successful reentry has numerous consequences, and these recommendations will spur broader actions and investments to tackle this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jenny A. Durkan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the last name.

Jenny A. Durkan
Mayor of Seattle